



Franklin Public Schools

*Office of the Superintendent
355 East Central Street; Suite 3
Franklin, Massachusetts 02038
Phone: 508-553-4819*

November 4, 2021

Dear Franklin Community,

I am writing to follow up on actions taken and planned after last week's disruption at the Franklin School Committee meeting as well as student representative comments related to bullying and harassment at school. We have been processing the impact and have been working to solidify a safe and respectful environment for civic discourse and promote healing.

We recognize that gathering student feedback is instrumental in appropriately addressing student needs. Members of the administration met with students about becoming a "No Place for Hate School" and had a productive dialogue that assessed morale and drove hope for a better FHS for all. In attendance were student representatives from A World of Difference, the Diversity Awareness Club, and the Sexuality and Gender Alliance. Additionally, we also reviewed historical bullying and harassment data. Our data leads us to suspect that incidents are being under-reported. We also listened for more information about perceptions of inaction.

In response, we have done or are doing the following things:

- On November 2nd, all K-12 school adjustment counselors and school psychologists participated in a professional development webinar series on supporting LGBTQIA+ students and understanding legal rights. We have also disseminated DESE guidance to counselors and principals issued on October 28, 2021 related to the [Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity](#). This will be an agenda item for an upcoming administrative meeting.
- We are developing an after school resource group for high school students to gather and talk about their experiences with bias-based incidents as well as actions that can be taken to make for a more equitable experience at school.
- We are accelerating the process of hiring a Director of Equity and Student Supports. We anticipate initiating this search within the next few weeks.
- We are accelerating plans to survey all students in Franklin High School for their perceptions of school climate and culture. We are in the process of preparing this survey with a highly regarded third-party resource (Panorama) and expect to be able to survey students the week after Thanksgiving. We anticipate surveying middle school students in the near future as well. This data will give us a greater understanding of the perspective of the student body and areas of focus for action. It will also serve as a baseline by which we can measure our improvement efforts.
- In response to potential under reporting and perception of inaction, we will revise our online reporting language and clearly define its use. Additionally, we will prioritize communicating the reporting, investigation, and response process.
- The high school administration is holding class meetings to start the beginning of quarter 2. Respectful, inclusive behavior of all will be a theme. They will also use this time to invite additional students to participate in the development of a series of activities for the school community towards becoming a "No Place for Hate School". These activities will activate a school-wide effort that integrates productive dialogue and active learning on the topics of bias, bullying, and allyship.

The community can expect stronger protocols and processes during the School Committee meetings. The Chair of the School Committee will communicate the expectations for respectful civic discourse as well as the processes for handling disruptive behavior for both in person and virtual participants. These expectations will be readily available once enacted by our incoming Chairperson.

Our actions will not be limited to those above, but these actions are the ones most immediately tied to the meeting last week. We will continue to keep the community informed of our efforts to affirm diversity, promote equity and accountability, and foster inclusion throughout the year.

With continued respect for all in Franklin,

Sara Ahern
Superintendent of Schools